

FACT SHEET

Partnering to Heal: Teaming Up to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections

An interactive, computer-based training for health professionals and students on preventing HAIs
May 2011

Partnering to Heal: Teaming Up Against Healthcare-Associated Infections

Partnering to Heal is a computer-based, interactive learning tool for early-career clinicians, health professional students, and patients and visitors on preventing healthcare-associated infections.

The training highlights effective communication about infection control practices and ideas for creating a “culture of safety” in healthcare institutions to keep patients from getting sicker. *Partnering to Heal* follows five main characters who each make decisions, controlled by the user:

- **A Physician & Hospital Administrator**, Nathan Green, Director of a Hospital Post-op Unit, ready to start new prevention efforts in the unit
- **A Registered Nurse**, Dena Gray, working to learn effective communications skills for interacting with her patients
- **An Infection Preventionist**, Janice Upshaw, a new employee charged with using a team-based approach to reducing infections
- **A Patient Family Member**, Kelly McTavish, whose father was just admitted to the hospital
- A third-year **Medical Student**, Manuel Hernandez, who wants to gain confidence to make a difference for his patients.

The training is designed to engage a variety of individuals within the hospital -- including patients and visitors -- in a team-based approach to preventing healthcare-associated infections. The training seeks to address the underlying thinking and behaviors of clinicians which contribute to the occurrence of healthcare-associated infections, rather than on specific clinical interventions such as the proper way to insert a central line.

Background

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created *Partnering to Heal* as part of a wider effort that works closely with public and private sector partners to improve the quality, safety, and affordability of health care for all Americans. Examples include the [HHS Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections](#) which outlines a goal to train the next generation of healthcare providers in infection control practices and foster a “culture of safety” in healthcare institutions. The Action Plan’s goals and activities are aligned with the newly launched [Partnership for Patients: Better Care, Lower Costs](#), a public-private partnership to reduce hospital-associated illnesses and injuries by 1.8 million by 2013. The new national partnership with hospitals, medical groups, consumer groups and employers will help save lives by preventing millions of injuries and complications in patient care over the next three years.

Accessing the Training Materials

To access the training, a facilitator’s guide, and additional resources:
<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/initiatives/hai/training/>.

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Training Content

Partnering to Heal targets clinical audiences (students and early-career clinicians) as well as patients and visitors to assist in the prevention of:

- Surgical site infection
- Central line-associated bloodstream infection
- Ventilator-associated pneumonia
- Catheter-associated urinary tract infection
- *Clostridium difficile* infection
- Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection.

In addition, basic protocols for universal precautions and isolation precautions are covered to protect patients, visitors, and practitioners from even the most common disease transmissions. *Partnering to Heal* targets knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of healthcare practitioners, patients, and visitors. Key behaviors targeted include:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Hand washing
- Flu vaccination
- Appropriate use of antibiotics
- Proper insertion, maintenance, and removal of devices, such as catheters and ventilators.

About the Technology

In *Partnering to Heal*, users assume the identity of characters in a computer-based video simulation and make decisions as each of those characters. Based upon the decisions, the storyline branches to different pathways and outcomes. The training may be used by groups in facilitated training sessions and by individuals as a self-paced learning tool.

This type of interactive, computer-based training has been shown to enhance individual's critical thinking and decision making skills in a way that helps individuals perform better when they face similar situations and pressures in real life. Research¹ has shown this to be an effective tool in knowledge acquisition and behavior change.

Partnership for Patients

Partnering to Heal seeks safer and better care for all patients, which is consistent with the recently launched [Partnership for Patients](#) initiative. As part of the initiative, HHS has set a goal of decreasing preventable hospital-acquired conditions by 40 percent (compared with 2010 rates) by the end of 2013. Achieving this goal should result in approximately 1.8 million fewer injuries and illnesses to patients, with more than 60,000 lives saved over the next three years. The Partnership for Patients has the potential to save up to \$35 billion in healthcare costs.

¹ Five studies were conducted, the most notable from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Boston University School of Public Health. The study examined the effects of a training program to reduce adolescent substance abuse. It found that, relative to comparison students, students who engaged in the training met 90% of outcome measures, indicating training effectiveness.